

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 4-12, 14, 15, 17 and 18 are pending in the present application. No claims have been added, amended or cancelled by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 12, 14, 15, 17 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Smith in view of Kask et al.; and Claims 9-11 were rejected under U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Smith in view of Kask et al. and Kaufer et al.

35 U.S.C. § 103 REJECTIONS

Regarding the above noted rejections of the claims, it is respectfully noted that Smith has a filing date of September 19, 2001, which is later than the claimed foreign priority application Japan 2000-245246 of the present application (i.e., August 11, 2000). Accordingly, to perfect the claim for priority, an English translation of the claimed foreign priority application will be filed in due course. Further, Applicants respectfully submit the foreign priority application fully supports the subject matter recited in the claims.

Accordingly, Smith is no longer a valid reference, and thus the rejections in the Office Action are moot.

CONCLUSION

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Paul Lewis, Registration No. 43,368, at (703) 205-8000, in the Washington, D.C. area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees

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Respectfully submitted,

By

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